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NEWS

Winchester Girl Scouts host Turkey Skate as fundraiser for trip to Europe

JOÃO-CAMERON HOPKINSON | CORRESPONDENT

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Flynn Rink hosted the Winchester Girl Scouts on Nov. 23 during their first ever Turkey Skate fundraiser.
WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOAO-CAMERON HOPKINSON

Gliding, twirling, and dancing across the ice, Winchester resider
feeling the “turkey season” at Flynn Rink in Medford last weeken

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For a small fee of $5 dollars per person, families could spend a relaxing Saturday afternoon on the ice, with an additional $3 for face painting services by the rink.

Suffice it to say, Winchester Girl Scouts' First Annual Turkey Skate was a smashing success.

The Turkey Skate stands as a new addition to the Winchester Girl Scouts' longtime tradition of fundraising. The reason? The periodic 14-day European trip Troop 77026 (the High School Troop) and Troop 77025 (the Middle School Troop) take is a hallmark of the scouting experience.

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The first ever Winchester Girl Scout Turkey Skate kicked off fundraising season for the troops. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOAO-CAMERON HOPKINSON

Lisa Olaharski, a parent volunteer with three children planning to go on the trip, said the girls will be going to France, England, and Swit

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"[They're] really excited to go to Europe, but to go, they have from now to then to raise all the funds," she said.

In other words, the funding required to send the girls on the trip of a lifetime must be raised entirely through the efforts of the troops. Working with the Scouts is Education First, a Boston-based company that has made these excursions possible in years past.

This year, nine scouts and three adult chaperones are going on the trip, which means thousands of dollars have to be raised between now and June, when the group is scheduled to leave. However, other troops from surrounding towns also intend on going, organizing separate fundraisers to help with the trip.

Elizabeth (Elli) Goeke, one of the chaperones accompanying the girls on the trip, is the service unit coordinator and leader for the Winchester Middle and High School troops.

Aside from the Europe trip occurring every other year, Goeke also accompanies the Scouts on trips in between, organizing regular excursions to New Zealand, Costa Rica, and other countries around the world.

Engaging the Scouts

Education First gives the Scouts a large degree of autonomy in crafting the itinerary for their trip, making outings such as these a great way to keep older kids engaged. Having a goal they can work towards and being actively involved in the planning for a trip makes the process of fundraising a bit less daunting.

Aside from Europe, Scouts often take trips to Boston musicals together, which has also proven to engage older kids. Similarly, they also v
Broadway shows in New York City every other year, and the experience of

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staying in an “awesome hostel” gives older Scouts a taste of traveling by themselves.

A history of Scouting

Coming from a family of Girl Scouts, it was only natural for Goeke to take up the pastime at a young age. For her, Scouting is about empowering young women and giving them opportunities that they might not otherwise have.

Olaharski, whose middle-school-aged daughters were interested in the camping and hiking activities, was drawn to Winchester Scouting for this very reason.

Winchester troops take regular hiking trips to the White Mountains, with one particular favorite being Zealand Falls in Bethlehem, N.H.

Olaharski is certainly not alone when it comes to parents who are active in Girl Scouts. As it turns out, some parents want to do activities more than their kids.

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In fact, in years past, parents have even fought over who gets to chaperone events. For example, the Broadway trips have a wait list for chaperoning (i.e. this year’s show is “Wicked”).

Scouts are open to all adult volunteers (dads, aunts, uncles, etc.) and there are a range of volunteers, not just moms. For example, Olaharski said she and her husband even fight over who gets to go on the hiking trips.

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Phoebe Goodwin, a math teacher at Winchester High School, is o troop leaders for the Cadet Girl Scouts Troop. As a teacher, she interacts

with students in a situation when they're being graded. However, in Scouts, she said she gets to see kids doing positive things and making a difference in their communities.

Starting scouting in second grade, Goodwin got her kids involved in the organization by the time they were in Kindergarten.

"Girl Scouts make great leaders and great multitaskers," Goodwin said. "The kids learn how to give back to the community and learn how to make goals and figure out how to reach them, and that the effort leads to the goal."

Winchester Girl Scouts not only hosted their first Turkey Skate on Nov. 23, but also sold other items to raise funds for a trip to Europe. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOAO-CAMERON HOPKINSON

Other fundraising events

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Winchester's Scout troops used to have a fundraising skate planned every January, but that was pre-pandemic. With a free skate on the agenda at Flynn Rink on Nov. 23, Winchester's troops decided to plan a Turkey Skate fundraiser.

It's a mix of trial and error when it comes to fundraisers, say troop organizers, but there are things they know worked in the past. And if they try things and they don't work, leaders say they just don't do them again.

For instance, drop-off babysitting worked, they say, and the troops have tried to do it a lot

While Sunday's Thanksgiving-themed skate kicked off this year's fundraising efforts with a bang, other troops have done similar skating events in the past that have also worked out well. Most notable was the "Winter Skate," which occurred every January, but was sadly discontinued due to COVID-19.

The Turkey Skate marks the first skating fundraiser since COVID.

The Scouts in attendance said they were especially grateful for Flynn Rink allowing them to rent out the space, and for waiving the cost of rentals, allowing the Turkey Skate to remain accessible for all.

Nevertheless, the road to Europe has only just begun for Troops 77025 and 77026 and the troops have many more creative events in store throughout the next six months.

Aside from the annual cookie sale, which began Nov. 25, the troops are planning to host a "Shredding Event" in the St. Eulelia parking lot in the spring. Conveniently timed right after tax season in April, the Scouts will help dispose of the endless droves of papers many have stored o around.

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The troops also plan on doing a Spring Clean by going around different households collecting soft goods in any condition (clothes, linens, blankets, towels, etc.) and giving them to Savers, a for-profit thrift retailer. Savers has agreed to give Winchester's troops a percentage of the earnings based on weight.

Keep an eye out for these and other fundraisers. For more information on Winchester Scouting, log on here.

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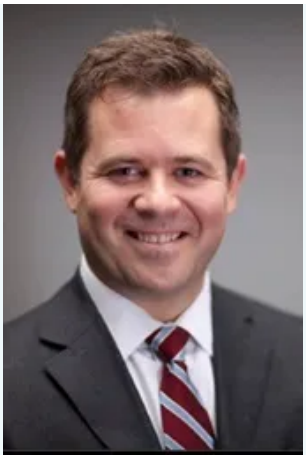

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